

VZCZCXYZ0028
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNO #0032/01 0251734
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 251734Z JAN 08
FM USMISSION USNATO
TO RUEHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE IMMEDIATE 3336
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1590
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 000032

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2118
TAGS: [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MK](#)
SUBJECT: PM GRUEVSKI DISCUSSES MACEDONIA'S NATO ACCESSION
PROSPECTS WITH PERMREPS JANUARY 23

REF: A. MACEDONIA MAP PROGRESS REPORT E-MAILED 01/17/08

[1](#)B. GREEK NAC SPEAKING NOTES (E-MAILED 01/23/08)

Classified By: Ambassador Victoria Nuland for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Prime Minister Gruevski discussed Macedonia's progress toward NATO accession with NATO PermReps on January 23, concluding Macedonia's ninth MAP cycle. He cited recent strides toward domestic political consensus, minority representation, decentralization, judicial reform, police reform, a National Security Strategy, anti-corruption, economic reform, and efforts to resolve the name issue. Ambassador Nuland praised Macedonia's progress on the administrative and judicial reforms, called for pressing home the fight against corruption, and urging "both sides" to be flexible on the name issue. In a long, toughly worded intervention sent from Athens, the Greek cast doubt on Macedonia's meeting NATO criteria across the board. Most Allies recognized Macedonia's contributions to NATO-led operations and its progress toward MAP objectives, but called for continued effort. Gruevski expressed optimism that Macedonia would make the cut, and that a solution could be found to the name issue. End Summary.

ENDING THE NINTH MAP CYCLE

[1](#)2. (C) Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, accompanied by D/PM Aliu, FM Milososki, DefMin Elenovski, name negotiator Dimitrov, and Macedonia's two Ambassadors based in Brussels, met with NATO PermReps on January 23 to discuss Macedonia's Membership Action Plan (MAP) progress report (REF A). This discussion concluded Macedonia's ninth MAP cycle, and was Skopje's best opportunity to convince Allies of its readiness to receive an invitation at NATO's April Summit to join the Alliance.

MAKING MACEDONIA'S CASE

[1](#)3. (C) Gruevski presented his government's record on meeting MAP criteria, stressing that Macedonia had "no alternative" to NATO membership, which was supported by all political parties and 90 percent of the population. He argued that Macedonia's perseverance through nine MAP cycles proved Macedonia's dedication and its contributions to NATO-led operations proved its loyalty. Anticipating questions about the sustainability of reforms implemented in months leading up to the Bucharest Summit, he insisted that reforms were irreversible and would continue beyond the Summit and beyond accession to the Alliance as well, as "there is always more to achieve." He detailed in turn progress on domestic political consensus-building, minority representation,

decentralization, judicial reform, police reform, a National Security Strategy, anti-corruption, economic reform, and "good-neighborly relations" (a MAP criterion that Greece has cited as requiring a solution to the name issue). Gruevski acknowledged that work remained to be done on the language law and on compensating the victims of 2001 violence (the toughest demands of Macedonia's Albanian minority).

THE GOOD NEIGHBOR CRITERION

¶4. (C) Greek Ambassador Stamatouopoulos made clear that Athens did not consider Macedonia's performance adequate to merit an invitation to NATO. His intervention (REF B) acknowledged "encouraging signs of progress in a number of specific fields," but only at a moderate pace and under international pressure, raising questions about its sustainability. He called on Skopje to reach accommodation with the largest Albanian party DUI and to carry out further administrative and judicial reforms; expressed concern about Macedonia's high rate of unemployment, and stressed the need for "full compliance with obligations... primary among them good neighborly relations." He cited the MAP report and UNSCRs 817 and 845 as calling on Macedonia to resolve the name issue "in the interest of the maintenance of peaceful and good neighborly relations in the region." Bulgarian Ambassador Ivanov also urged "a new way of thinking about good neighborly relations," to pay more attention to neighbors' sensitivities as well as being an active participant in regional fora. Ivanov also expressed concern that direct quotes from classified NATO documents had found their way into the Macedonian media. (NOTE: the Bulgarians explained to us after the NAC that quotations from the MAP report had been printed in the January 21 "Utrinski Vesnic.")

SPRINT TO THE FINISH

¶5. (C) Ambassador Nuland offered condolences on the death of eleven Macedonian peacekeepers returning from the Althea mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina "as part of the sacrifices Macedonian soldiers are making for our common peace and security." She praised Macedonia's progress on the administrative and judicial reforms that the U.S. interagency team had recommended in Skopje ten weeks earlier. She called on Gruevski to press forward on corruption prosecutions and implementing recent legislation, and sprint to Bucharest. Noting that the President supported "the largest possible merited enlargement" at the NATO Summit, she urged "both sides" to be creative and flexible in the ongoing Greek-Macedonia name talks under UN auspices, and solve this long-festering issue "now."

ALLIES DIVIDED

¶6. (C) Twenty other Allied PermReps intervened. Most noted appreciation for Macedonia's contributions to NATO-led operations and acknowledged considerable progress on its MAP objectives, but Allies were clearly divided as to the sufficiency of this progress. Slovenia, Turkey, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Estonia, Iceland, and Portugal signaled that they would likely support an invitation to Macedonia at the summit. Beside the U.S., Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Norway, France, and Portugal all emphasized the imperative of reaching agreement with Greece on the name. Italy (speaking for Spain and France as well, although their Ambassadors were present), said that "efforts to reach agreement are not enough," an actual solution was essential. Slovenia, the UK, Turkey, Poland, Latvia, Slovakia, Estonia, and the Netherlands pointedly made no mention of the name issue.

OPTIMISM ABOUT A NAME

¶7. (C) Gruevski responded effectively to most questions. He pointed out that government funding for local administration had tripled, and that now a majority of municipalities controlled their own budgets. He said that reforms were irreversible, as government planning went well beyond 2008,

and would not be dropped whatever the outcome of the NATO Summit. Addressing Greece's critique, he said that the name was "the only serious issue" between them and promised to "double our efforts" to reach accommodation. Agreeing with Ambassador Nuland on the need to make the most of UN mediator Nimetz's efforts to find agreement on the name issue, he expressed optimism, concluding "I believe we will come to a solution."

NULAND